Export Credit Gurantee Scheme

543. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Seafood Export Association has called for waiving the export credit gurantee scheme under which exporters have to pay 0.5% of the total value of their exports to Government; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) The Government has not received any representation from the Seafood Exporters Association for waiving the export credit gurantee scheme underwhich exporters have to pay 0.5% of the total value of their exports to the Government.

Withdrawal From WTO

544. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are proposing to pull out of WTO;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefore; and

(c) how do Government think that walking out of WTO would be in the country's benefit stating the economic implications involved in the event of withdrawal from WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (c) Do not arise.

Trade Between India And Bangladesh

545. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what has been the quantum of trade between India and Bangladesh during the last three years;

(b) whether Government are thinking of strengthening the trade between the two countries; and

(c) if so, whether Government will formulate a trade package to improve trade, particularly between North-East and Bangladesh?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The quantum of trade between India and Bangladesh during the last three years is shown below:

(Value in Rs. Crores)

Year	Exports to Bangladesh	Imports from Bangladesh	Total trade
1996-97	3084.80	220.91	3305.71
1997-98	2922.87	188.85	3111.72
1998-99	4168.03	267.65	4435.68

SOURCE DGCI&S, Calcutta

(b) India and Bangladesh have been making efforts to foster and strengthen trade relations. This is apparent from the growing trade figures.

(c) Under the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), India and Bangladesh have exchanged tariff concessions on a large number of products during the last three rounds of negotiations. Also, Government has lifted quantitative restrictions on all items of import from SAARC countries, including Bangladesh, with effect from 1.8.1998. These measures are expected to facilitate increased trade between the two countries.;

Further, Government has taken several steps for promoting exports from North East to all countries including Bangladesh. These include, inter alia, relaxation under the Export-Import Policy, including double weightage to exports for fulfilling export obligations, sanction of projects for development of export infrastructure from the North Eastern states under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme, setting up of Export Promotion Industrial Parks, identification of Land Customs Stations for infrastructure development, opening of offices of various Export Promotion Councils and Commodity Boards etc. Due to the geographical proximity of the two

countries, these measures are likely to result in increased bilateral trade.

Decline In Export of Rice

546. DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's rice export during the first seven months of 1999-2000 declined by 67.7 per cent at 14.20 lakh tonnes compared to 44 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year;

(b) if so, what are the factors responsible for such decline; and

(c) what steps are being proposed by Government to increase the export of rice in future?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The total quantity and value of export of rice (basmati & non-basmati rice) during the period April—August, 99 and April—August, 98 are as follows:—

Period	Quantity (in lakh MT)	Value (in Rs. crores)
April—August, 99 (Prov.)	6.68	1140.88
April—August, 98	16.40	2153.72

(SOURCE: DGCI&S Calcutta)

(b) The exports of rice would depend upon International demand and the domestic supply position, international and domestic prices, consumer preferences, and varieties traded. Low international demand and better crop production in rice consuming countries has led to the shrinking of Indian rice exports.

(c) Some of the steps taken to enhance exports of rice include conducting publicity campaigns, sending delegations abroad, participating in International trade fairs, inviting potential buyers and providig financial assistance to exporters for improving quality,